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INDIA INVITES BORIS JOHNSON AS 2021 REPUBLIC DAY CHIEF GUEST

Prime Minister Narendra Modi reportedly extended the invite to the UK premier during a telephonic conversation on Nov 27

CAN'T CONFIRM, SAYS BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION

However, a British High Commission spokesperson said that the mission cannot confirm or deny the news. "We can't confirm one way or the other. Prime Minister Boris Johnson is keen to visit India as soon as possible," the official said. Modi is likely to travel to London next year for the G-7 summit. An invitation for the same was extended to him by Johnson

UK FOREIGN SECY MAY ALSO VISIT INDIA

Acting British High Commissioner to India Jan Thompson had recently said Johnson and British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab would make an in-person visit to India in the next few months
"Had an excellent discussion with my friend @BorisJohnson on madmap for India-UK ties in next decade," Modi tweeted on Nov 27

2020

REPUBLIC DAY CHIEF GUEST WAS BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT JAIR BOLSONARO



It's siesta time for a farmer under a tractor-trolley at Ghazipur on the Delhi-UP border on Wednesday | P11

Fresh proposal cooking; Shah to meet Amarinder

Talks with farmers today; unions seek special Parliament session

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

THE Union Government is likely to come up with a fresh proposal to resolve the current stalemate during talks with farmer unions on Thursday, even as the agitators, while claiming that more people will join their protest, demanded a special session of Parliament to repeal three contentious farm sector reform laws.

The decision to make a revised proposal was taken at a meeting Union Home Minister Amit Shah had with colleagues Narendra Singh Tomar and Piyush Goyal at his residence on Wednesday, a day after the government's talks with farmers ended inconclusively.

Ahead of the talks, Shah is expected to meet Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on Thursday morning to discuss the way forward. Singh may even attend the meeting with farmers later to help arrive at a settlement, said sources.

For his part, Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar again appealed to the farmers to end their protests. "I appeal to the farmers to end their protests and arrive at a solution through discussions. Also, people of Delhi have to show patience. The government understands that they are facing difficulties," he said.

As for the farmers, they kept

Transporters' turn to threaten strike

The All India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC) has called for a strike in support of the agitating farmers. "Starting December 8, we will halt the movement of supplies in entire North India including Delhi, J&K, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan," it said

up their belligerence, warning the Centre against attempting to sow discord among their ranks. Contrary to the narrative being built by the government, their campaign was not limited to farmers from Punjab, they sought to emphasise.

Labelling it as a movement of farmers from across the country, the union leaders said Thursday's meeting with Tomar and Goyal would have wider representation from their side.

"The government tried to show this is just a movement of farmers from Punjab... We have also decided that farmer leaders from all over the country should participate in the talks," said Darshan Pal, president of the Krantikari Kisan Union.

He also demanded that the government call a special session of Parliament to repeal the three farm sector laws.

CONTINUED ON P9

State's farmers will go to Delhi in 100 vehicles

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

ACTIVISTS and farmers' associations in Karnataka are planning to send farmers from across the state in over 100 vehicles to Delhi in a show of solidarity with farmers who are protesting near Delhi against the farm Bills and to oppose the shabby treatment of farmers there.

Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha president Badagalapura Nagendra told reporters here on Wednesday, "We strongly condemn the forcible attempts to stop farmers from agitating against the new laws. Thus, we have decided to protest against it on a large scale by sending several farmers from the state to Delhi. We will take a decision on this soon and announce our future plans of agitation," he said.

He added that they will stage protest in Bengaluru from December 7-15, when the Assembly will be in session, against the State Government for changing existing laws and introducing new policies that are anti-farmer, anti-labour and anti-people. The PM is more concerned about corporates than farmers, he remarked.

VACCINATION NEXT WEEK IN UK, RUSSIA

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ New Delhi

THE UK on Wednesday became the first country in the West to approve a Covid-19 vaccine, leapfrogging over the US and Europe to grant emergency use authorisation to a jab developed jointly by US pharma major Pfizer and German firm BioNTech. Vaccination is set to begin early next week.

Hours later, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered universal vaccination with the homegrown Sputnik V. "Let's agree on this — you will not report to me next week, but you will start mass vaccination," Putin reportedly told Deputy Prime Minister Tatiana Golikova.

The UK's approval came just 23 days after Pfizer released the first data from its phase 3 trial. While it showed 95% efficacy against Covid, the sticking point was the need to store it at -70°C.

The UK has so far bought 40 million doses of the vaccine, enough to inoculate 20 million or about 30% of the population, as two shots per person are needed to develop immunity.

The World Health Organisation (WHO), too, is examining Pfizer's data. A WHO emergency use listing would allow countries to authorise it for national emergency use and open the door to its international supply

SELECTIVE AMNESIA ON UNIVERSAL SHOTS?

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA
@ New Delhi

THE Union Government's announcement on Tuesday that the entire population will not be given the Covid-19 shot is a major deviation from its earlier stance, as in one of the first meetings on the vaccination chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June, it had clearly stated "that vaccination must be affordable and universal — no person should be left behind."

It also goes against the declared objective of most developed countries that have already announced universal vaccination. While the US,

Australia and European Union have said they will provide free vaccination to all, some other countries such as the UK and Canada have pre-booked vaccine doses in excess of their population.

Following the meeting chaired by Modi on June 30, the government had issued a statement that mentioned four guiding principles that would form the foundation of the national effort of Covid-19 immunisation. "First, that vulnerable groups should be identified and prioritized for early vaccination, for example doctors, nurses, healthcare workers, non-medical frontline corona warriors, and vulnerable people among the general population..." it said.

CONTINUED ON: P10

K'taka releases ₹300 cr for vaccine trials, Covid treatment

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

KARNATAKA on Wednesday began phase-3 trials of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin vaccine at Vydehi Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Centre (VIMSRC). Health Minis-

ter Dr K Sudhakar said ₹300 crore had been set aside for vaccine trials and providing Covid-19 treatment free of cost.

Covaxin trials are also being held at Jeevan Rekha Hospital in Belagavi.

With 1,000 volunteers to be

administered the vaccine initially, the trials being carried out in collaboration with Clintrac International will see two doses being given to volunteers.

"The doses will be 28 days apart. The vaccine will be administered after we screen

the volunteers for their health status. They should be above 18 years of age, should not have had previous exposure to Covid-19, and should not have immuno-deficiencies like cancer," said Dr D V Chalapathy, co-investigator of the trials.

P7

Doctor, 2 nurses booked for selling newborn

B THIPPERUDRAPPA @ Chikmagalur

A doctor and two nurses at the government hospital in Koppa, and a woman from Sringeri have been booked by the Koppa police on Tuesday for allegedly threatening an unmarried girl who had come for delivery and selling the newborn for Rs 55,000.

The doctor Balakrishna and nurses Reshma and Shobha are accused of selling the girl child to one Prema of Sringeri. After the unwed girl's mother raised the issue recently with the hospital administrative officer, a complaint was lodged with the Koppa police.

District Health Officer D Umesh told TNIE that the administrative officer was directed to verify the records and since allegations were proved, cases were booked against the doctor and the nurses. The issue was also investigated by the Child Rights and Welfare Committee and the Child Development Project Officer.

Chikmagalur Superintendent of Police M H Akshay told TNIE that an FIR has been registered for kidnap and illegal adoption. "All the four accused are now absconding. We will arrest them in a day or two", he said.

The 20-year-old unmarried girl, a resident of Theerthahalli in Shivamogga district, was abandoned by her boyfriend after she conceived. The nine-month pregnant girl was brought to the Koppa government hospital in an ambulance for delivery on March 14. That night, she delivered a girl child.

P7

Kerala bars young women in Sabarimala

MANOJ VISWANATHAN @ Kochi

TWO years after it allowed two young women to visit the Sabarimala Ayyappa temple following a Supreme Court verdict, the CPM-led Kerala government and the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) seem to have changed their stance on women's entry to the hill shrine.

The portal launched by the TDB in association with the Kerala Police for online services, like virtual queue for darshan, says that "females and other gender (trans) less than 50 years and above 65 years won't be allowed."



The state government had earlier said children below 10 years and those above 65 years won't be permitted due to Covid restrictions.

The TDB, which manages the temple, had argued before the five-member Constitution

bench of the Supreme Court in February 2019 it was against discriminating anyone based on their biological attributes.

The government had also opposed the review petitions filed against the September 28, 2018 verdict that allowed women's entry at the temple.

Hindu Aikya Veda, which had launched a fierce protest against entry of young women in the temple, termed the move a political gimmick in view of the upcoming local body and Assembly polls.

However, the TDP chose to distance itself from the new decision saying the portal is managed by the police.

3-DAY SUSPENSE

Ex-minister's kidnap: A dozen questions beg answers

MANJU SHETTA @ Bengaluru

A day after the former minister Varthar Prakash filed a case of kidnap against some unknown persons, who, on November 25, had allegedly kidnapped him and his driver Suneel for a Rs 30 crore ransom, many unanswered questions have emerged in the episode.

"Why was no missing person complaint filed by Prakash's family members for three days, when he was held hostage between November 25 and 27? Was he in touch with his family? His call detail records (CDRs) will be investigated to find out more details," said highly placed police sources. "Prakash did not give any

reasons for the delay in filing a kidnap case. He had initially refused to file a written police complaint," the sources pointed out.

A senior police officer told The New Indian Express that the former minister came to the police station only after the Bellandur police found his SUV abandoned near Alana-halli lake and alerted him. "He

admitted that it was his vehicle and then explained what had happened. He, however, refused to file a complaint with the police. He agreed to file a written complaint only when the police asked him to do so," said the officer. The FIR is registered against unknown people. "He should have told the police who he suspects to be behind the crime," the officer added.

P5

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